

# Chequamegon Chirps

## Newsletter of the Chequamegon Bird Club

Medford, Wisconsin

March 2007

Volume 26 Number 3

### NEXT MEETING

**DATE:** Monday, March 19, 2007

**TIME:** 7:00 p.m.

**LOCATION:** Multipurpose Building  
Taylor County Fairgrounds  
Hwy. 13 and 64  
Medford

**PROGRAM:** Birds through the Year  
Eleanor Kratzat

**FOOD:** Bolz, Heide

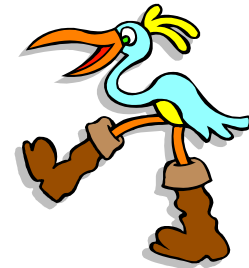
Please bring your own cup for beverage.



### Important Announcement: March Meeting Location

The **MARCH** meeting will be held at the **MULTIPURPOSE BUILDING** at the County Fairgrounds.

The April and May meetings will be held at the Medford Public Library.



### Birding Ethics

Did you just receive a report that a rare yellow-tufted boot-foot has been sighted in your neighbor's woods? Ready to grab your binocs, your tape recorder, and your camera and head over there to try to add him to your life list and get a photo of the rare bird? You may want to reconsider! Are those woods one of the only places he is likely to nest? Will he tolerate the hordes who want to see him? Will your tape make him think he has competition and waste energy trying to find his rival? Does your neighbor want forty-three people tramping across his field to get to the woods?

The Spring 2007 issue of *The Passenger Pigeon, Journal of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology* featured several issues papers from the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative. Among the papers was one titled "Ethical Standards in Birding: A WBCI Issues Paper on Protecting Endangered, Threatened, and Rare Species". While the paper focuses on rarer species, it includes a list of guidelines that are applicable to all birding. The guidelines, which are excerpted from the WSO Code of Ethics, are as follows:

- Always act in ways that do not endanger the welfare of birds and other wildlife.
- Observe all laws, rules, and regulations for public and private birding areas.
- Limit use of recordings and similar methods of attracting birds, especially in heavily birded areas or in known locations of rare birds or those that are easily disturbed.
- Observe and photograph birds without disturbing them in significant ways.
- Avoid chasing or repeatedly flushing birds.
- Minimize adverse effects to the environment by staying on existing roads, trails, and pathways whenever possible.

The complete list is on the WSO website:

<http://www.uwgb.edu/birds/wso/ethics.htm>

## **Bryan Meets Butcher Bird – Willa Pledger**

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One winter morning a few years ago, I was sitting in the kitchen enjoying the peace and quiet of the new day. Bryan, our pet budgie bird, was out of his cage, gnawing on an egg biscuit as he perched on the ledge of the bay window. Bryan liked to perch there to watch and listen to outside 'cousins' visiting our bird feeders.

Suddenly there was scratching on the window pane, and I looked up to see a menacing gray and white bird hovering outside. Bryan took off like a shot to find a safe haven in a distant part of the house! This was Bryan's one and only encounter with a northern shrike. Fortunately for the budgerigar, the pane of glass was there to protect him.

The northern shrike (*Lanius excubitor*) and the similar loggerhead shrike are the only two members of the shrike family found in North America. The edges of coniferous forests and open willow brush country are preferred habitat for the northern shrike, and it is also found in many of the northern regions of Eurasia.

The northern shrike is robin-sized and has a stout, hooked bill. Its call is a mixture of warbles and harsh tones with a robin-like quality and often mimics the calls and songs of other birds. Unusual among songbirds, shrikes prey on small birds and rodents, catching them with the bill and sometimes impaling them on thorns or barbed wire for storage. At times they hunt from an



open perch, where they sit motionless until prey appears; at other times they hover in the air ready to pounce on anything that moves.

Normally a solitary hunter, it perches atop trees and scans for prey. When prey is sighted, it drops from its perch and flies low over the ground. It knocks flying victims to the ground with a blow from the bill or seizes with its feet. Once on the ground, it kills with a series of bites. Unlike raptors, the shrike lacks the powerful talons that hawks use to dispatch prey.

While northern shrikes prey on small mammals such as lemmings, voles and mice, insects are also consumed. Grasshoppers, flies, beetles and caterpillars may make up to one-quarter of its diet in season.

## **Another Flying Feeder Visitor – Cathy Mauer**

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One of my favorite feeder visitors comes to visit at night. It is as cute as can be, having large eyes and very soft looking fur. Yes, fur – not feathers. At least one flying squirrel comes almost every night, often two or more. A flying squirrel doesn't really fly, but rather glides with legs outstretched and the patagium (a flap of skin attached to the legs and sides of the body) spread. It has a rather flat tail that adds to the lift and also helps it steer. Most often it glides from high in one tree to near the base of another, typically gliding twenty to fifty feet per glide. However, it can glide 150 feet or more. It brakes by lifting its head and tucking its tail in.

In this part of Wisconsin we have both northern and southern flying squirrels. They look almost identical though the northern is somewhat larger. The total length of the northern is 10.5-12.5 inches with the tail



Continued on page 3

## Bird Reports – January/February 2007



Sighting participants included: *Rhoda Barber, Gayle Davis, Connie Decker, Mary and Harvey Guenther, Hildegard and Loretta Kuse, Ken Luepke, Doug and Willa Pledger, Cathy Mauer, Gordy Ruesch, Larry Ruhde, Greg and Cam Scott.*

Total Number of Species Observed this month is: 55

- Canada Goose, Trumpeter Swan (Ruhde), Mallard, Common Goldeneye, (Pledger / Scott / Davis), Hooded Merganser (Davis / Scott), Common Merganser,
- Ring-necked Pheasant, Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey
- Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Golden Eagle (Scott), American Kestrel
- Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove
- Eastern Screech-Owl (Luepke), Great Horned Owl, Snowy Owl (Decker / Luepke / Scott), Barred Owl, Short-eared Owl (Decker / Luepke / Ruhde)
- Belted Kingfisher (Ruhde)
- Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker
- Northern Shrike
- Blue Jay, American Crow, Common Raven
- Horned Lark
- Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse (Guenther), Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper
- American Robin (Decker / Luepke / Ruhde)
- European Starling
- Cedar Waxwing
- American Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Lapland Longspur, Snow Bunting
- Northern Cardinal
- Purple Finch, House Finch, Red Crossbill (Davis / Scott), White-winged Crossbill (Scott), Common Redpoll (Decker), Pine Siskin (Mauer / Ruesch / Scott), American Goldfinch
- House Sparrow

### Flying Squirrels (continued)

accounting for 4.5 to 6 inches of that. It weighs from 4 to 7.5 ounces. The total length of the southern is 8.5 to 10 inches and the tail is 3.5 to 4.5 inches. It weighs 2.5 to 3.5 ounces.

Both species are brownish on top with light-colored underparts. The northern tends to be more reddish.

Flying squirrels are omnivores, eating nuts, seeds, fruit, buds, fungi, insects, and sometimes bird eggs or young birds.

They usually nest in cavities, frequently old woodpecker holes. The northern, and occasionally the southern, may also build a summer breeding nest in the open, usually in a conifer. Southern flying squirrels usually have two litters

per year while northerns have only one. Litter size varies but three is most common. They also use cavities for shelter, and often several, or even up to twenty or so, will share the same cavity during the winter. They do not hibernate but may stay in the cavity during very cold weather.

As with birds, roaming cats are a major predator. Owls, hawks, fox, and weasels also prey on them.

In order to enjoy this nocturnal visitor, I attached a simple wooden platform to a living room window. Light from the living room allows me to see them when they come for a sunflower seed dinner.

## Reminders

- ✓ **Aluminum Recycling Fundraiser:** Please bring your aluminum to meetings.





**Editor, Chequamegon Chirps**  
**N4416 Crane Dr.**  
**Medford WI 54451-9376**

**Club Officers 2006-2007**

- President* – Gayle Davis
- Vice-president* – Connie Decker
- Secretary* – Hildegard Kuse
- Treasurer* – Bernice Gokey

**Other Club Contacts**

- Web site: [www.sws-wis.com/cbc](http://www.sws-wis.com/cbc)
- Email: [info@chequamegonbirdclub.org](mailto:info@chequamegonbirdclub.org)
- Newsletter Email: [newsletter@chequamegonbirdclub.org](mailto:newsletter@chequamegonbirdclub.org)
- Bird sightings: Connie Decker

**March – April Outdoors**

- March 20 – Spring equinox
- Spring migrants begin arriving in earnest – some of the early birds include bluebird, red-winged blackbird, robin, duck, heron, sandhill crane, woodcock, loon
- April 2 – Full moon
- Frogs and salamanders emerge; spring peepers and chorus frogs begin singing
- Mosquitoes and ticks begin making their appearance
- Chipmunks emerge from dens
- Many young mammals being born
- Turkeys begin gobbling
- Contribute to the Endangered Resources Fund on your Wisconsin Income Tax return



**Bird Library**

*Photographing Birds* by Rulon E. Simmons with Bates Littlehales. Published by National Geographic.

This slim volume includes information on equipment, both film and digital; strategies such as taking advantage of your backyard feeders; ways to move close; using blinds including how to build a simple portable one; hints on taking photos of birds in flight; and a chapter on some of the special challenges faced by those trying to capture birds in photos.

There are suggestions for places to go throughout the United States [though none in Wisconsin]. It also includes reminders to use good birding ethics when trying to get photos.

And it includes many beautiful photos of birds.